



04-28-09

‘Swine’ flu not connected to eating pork products

U.S. officials suggest trading partners overreacted

By Sara Wyant

© Copyright Agri-Pulse Communications, Inc.

Every year, thousands of people around the globe die of some form of influenza, but the discovery that more than 60 U.S. citizens may have been sickened by a form of the so-called “swine flu” prompted trading partners to slap the door on importing U.S. pork.

The Russian government has suspended imports of all meat from Mexico as well as Texas, California and Kansas shipped after April 21 on fears of the spread of swine flu. In addition, China has banned pork imports from Mexico and the U.S. states of Texas, Kansas and California

The Russian suspension also applies to pork shipped from Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, Georgia, Kansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma and Florida after April 21. Russia also suspended imports from the nations of Guatemala, Honduras, Dominican Republic, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Nicaragua, Panama and El Salvador.

Other U.S. trading partners are following suit. Thailand also has suspended imports of U.S. and Mexican pork and set up scanners at Bangkok's main airport to check arriving passengers for signs of swine flu. Philippines officials have ordered stricter monitoring of all its ports to block entry of hogs and pork from the United States and Mexico.

United States Trade Representative Ron Kirk and U.S. Department of Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced on Monday that the American food supply is safe. In their announcement, Kirk and Vilsack cite references from the World Health Organization (WHO) and CDC statements that there is no evidence of swine influenza being transmitted by meat.

“Swine influenza viruses are not spread by food. You cannot get swine influenza from eating pork or pork products. Eating properly handled and cooked pork products is safe.” Addressing potential concerns about the safety of U.S. pork and pork products, Secretary Vilsack stated that: “While there is no evidence at this time that swine has been infected

with this virus, the science is clear that consuming or handling pork, consistent with safe handling practices, is of no risk to consumers.”

Ambassador Kirk urged all trading partners to base any food safety measures taken to protect their populations on scientific evidence and in accordance with their international obligations. In a statement, Kirk said that “restrictions on U.S. pork or pork products or any meat products from the United States resulting from the recent outbreak do not appear to be based on scientific evidence and may result in serious trade disruptions without cause.”

#30